

## Post-Event Summary Report

Name of Event: **Social Engagement: Addressing the Needs of Older Adults**

Date of Event: May 26, 2005

Location of Event: Cleveland Public Library Lake Shore Facility, 17133 Lake Shore Blvd. Cleveland, OH 44110

Number of persons Attending: 40

Sponsoring Organizations: **Cleveland Public Library, Senior Success Vision Council, North Coast SeniorsConnect.org, and the Cleveland Area Metropolitan Library System**

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### **Priority Issue #1: Programs and Services**

Are public libraries prepared to provide adequate services to the older adult population and position themselves as focal points for lifelong learning, particularly to segments like the baby boomers, kinship caregivers, disabled, and homebound?

#### *Barriers:*

- Budget
- Adequate staff with the right competencies and training.
- Baby Boomers rejecting the "senior" label.
- Lack of marketing of library services resulting in lack of awareness on the part of the public.
- Disabilities common among an older population.
- Digital divide.
- Heavily print-based content.

#### *Proposed Solutions:*

- Adaptive technology, not in separate section but blended throughout the library.
- Relevant programming and library materials to serve kinship caregivers, and the "sandwich generation," based on research into information needs of older adults.
- Become a clearinghouse for civic engagement of all kinds; paid employment, volunteer positions, education, the arts, and leisure activities.
- Present the library as a neutral source of information by including a variety of subjects and points of view.
- Plan intergenerational activities for kinship caregivers. Consider separate programs for the two generations at the same time.
- Book discussions and author lectures that appeal to mature adults.
- Provide opportunities to socialize and interact with all ages.

- Outreach to senior agencies, residential centers, senior daycare centers, and the homebound, including advertising in newsletters targeted to older adults and stressing free programs and classes.
- Provide computer classes with special curriculum for seniors.
- Include services to older adults in strategic plans that determine budgets.
- Consider senior specialist staff member to coordinate programs and services to seniors.
- Partner with community organizations that have expertise in aging issues and can compliment and supplement the Library's mission.
- Lobby the American Library Association and schools of library and information science to offer academic emphasis on serving older adults.

## **Priority Issue #2 Partnerships and Collaborations**

Is the library adequately prepared to engage community partners in collaboration in order to extend our resources and accomplish the solutions to Priority #1?

### *Barriers*

- The library's image and credibility as an effective, relevant public institution.
- Adequate staff and resources to identify, build, and maintain partnerships.
- Lack of knowledge of community needs and strengths.
- Increasing diversity of population including non-English-speaking new immigrants.
- Competition from other libraries and information providers.

### *Proposed Solutions*

- Recruit staff from minority groups and new immigrant groups.
- Consider for-profit as well as non-profit partners.
- Collaborate with branch libraries and other library systems as well as non-library partners.
- Identify community stakeholders and funders. Encourage librarians to visit/serve on neighborhood committees and boards.
- Link to collaborators' websites and ask partners to provide a link to the Library's website.
- Coordinate the use of community information bulletin boards.
- Partner to provide literacy classes, i.e. financial, legal, medical to assist older adults in remaining well informed.
- Collection development policies should provide for local history, biography, genealogy collections.

## **Priority Issue #3 The Library: an Elder-Friendly Environment?**

Are the library building and the environment "elder friendly," and do they contribute to the success of programs and services? Is the staff coached to be user-directed?

### *Barriers*

- Increasing noise level in libraries.
- Lack of adequate space and creative design for different age groups.
- Staff awareness of the preferences, needs of older adults.
- Lack of self-serve and non-mediated options for independently oriented Baby Boomers.

- Adequate numbers of large-print materials to match size of baby boom generation.
- Transportation

*Proposed Solutions:*

- Replace existing equipment with adaptive technology, which is becoming less expensive, such as large-size keyboards, large monitors, telephone amplifiers, etc.
- Use comfortable furniture, convenient shelving, good lighting, color contrasts and make entrances and doorways easy to use and pass through.
- Recruit retired librarian volunteers to assist with programs and classes for older adults.
- Provide voice recognition technology wherever possible.
- Consider display space, meeting rooms, space for leisure pursuits and socializing when planning programs and services and attracting partners.
- Design senior friendly web pages including issue alerts , relevant links, and event information.
- Publicize remote services such as E-Books, online book discussions, and E-Reference which may be accessed 24/7 without visiting the library. Offer self-serve options for renew, check out, placing reserves.
- Ask staff to be sensitive to unmet needs and the patron who needs adaptive technology but does not ask.
- Plan space for quiet and noisy areas. Use modular furniture that may be rearranged as service needs change.
- Invest in mobile libraries that are completely handicap accessible.